

TESTIMONY ON

HB 6633: An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing

By The Reverend Ronald Kolanowski on behalf of St. Peter's Episcopal Church and the Commons Community Development Corporation, Hebron

Date: February 28, 2023

To: Members of the Housing Committee

On behalf of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron and the Commons Community Development Corporation (Commons CDC) I am writing in support of HB 6633, Fair Share Legislation.

I am the rector of a small Episcopal Church in Hebron. Our church community own 45 acres of land in the center of Hebron village, of which 22 acres backs up to the entire historic town village business district on the east side of Route 85. On the west side of Route 85 we own 23 acres. We are in the process of exploring the creation of over 50 housing units for mixed-income affordable housing on portions of this land.

Like several small towns in our state, Hebron is reaching the point where affordable, attainable housing is out of reach for many who live and work in our community such as our teachers, first responders and service people. Like many towns we see young people moving away because they cannot get a start in towns whose zoning rules maintain a system forcing them to leave the communities in which they were born and raised. We see elderly wishing to downsize from larger homes unable to find appropriate housing in town and are forced to relocate to other communities after a lifetime of engagement in this community. It is an economic imperative for stability and growth of not only our community of Hebron, but of many of the small and rural communities in our state.

The remedy to both the economic concerns of communities and maintaining the rural character is smart development that can revitalize village centers like we have in Hebron while at the same time providing housing options to allow the people who live and work here opportunities to attain housing within their means. This smart development creates a walkable village center, to all our schools, and essential service that can also attract new business to our community.

Now, speaking as a leader of a faith community, our mission is to advance reconciliation and restoration of all people with God and one another. Part of this work necessitates advancing justice in our communities. While we cannot change many aspects of the of community life, one area where we can make a direct impact on the lives of those who live in Hebron is through advocating for and actually helping to build affordable, attainable, high-quality housing. Smart development of our 45 acres of land located in heart of the village is an important tool in advancing justice and reconciling and restoring the world as God intended it to be.

Establishing goals for Fair Share Housing coupled with changes to more favorable zoning to foster multifamily housing options are essential to the long-term well-being of towns across Connecticut. In such a setting the village becomes the vibrant center of community life. Legislation like Fair Share Housing has been proven effective in economic growth, makes communities like ours a more appealing place to live, while protecting the important rural land outside of village centers. A

high opportunity community like Hebron is a perfect place to live, work, and raise a family. We want to do our part to support those efforts.

On behalf of the St. Peter's parish community and the Commons Community Development Corporation to build more affordable housing options. I strongly urge the passage of this legislation.